Meridian Institute
Connecting People to Solve Problems

7th CAADP Partnership Platform Meeting Summary of Discussion: Side Event on SPS Issues and Formation of a Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA)

March 23, 2011, Yaounde, Cameroon

On March 23, as part of the 7th CAADP Partnership Platform meeting, Meridian Institute, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the African Union Commission hosted a side event on SPS Issues and the proposed formation of a Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa (PACA). The meeting was well-attended by a broad range of participants from African governments, farmers organizations, private sector, African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities, and donors. Our presenters ably outlined the broader food safety issues and aflatoxin concerns, the concrete case for aflatoxin control in Kenya, and the array of possible programs and activities needed to control aflatoxin.

The final communiqué from the 7th CAADP PP will be released soon. Based on the drafts circulated and discussed during the 7th CAADP PP, we anticipate that the final communiqué will mention the outcomes and next steps from the side event, including the intention to form a CAADP Working Group on SPS issues. A link to the communiqué will be included as soon as it is available.

For more information on aflatoxin issues, including materials contained in the SPS/aflatoxin information packet and the 7th CAADP PP side event presentations, visit our website at:

http://www.merid.org/aflatoxinpartnership/CAADP_PP.aspx

During the side event, meeting participants offered many constructive comments and recommendations, based on their own experiences with aflatoxin contamination in Africa. Participants expressed strong support for an Africa-owned partnership for aflatoxin control that takes action at national, regional, and Africa-wide levels. Participants also supported creating a working group on incorporating ("mainstreaming") broader sanitary and phytosanitary issues into the CAADP framework. Some of the comments from participants included:

General Comments

- Aflatoxin directly impacts CAADP Pillar 2, which includes creating opportunities to access global, national, and local markets. Trade agreements require compliance with

SPS rules. Addressing aflatoxin will help with trade.

- Participants expressed strong support for a Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa. Suggestions included:
    - Farmers should have a strong voice in the partnership. Build the partnership from the ground up.
    - The private sector will have a critical role to play in addressing the problem. Engage them in the partnership.
    - Identify existing programs that can be integrated in an effort to control aflatoxin, e.g., value chain development.
    - Actions should be both sub-regional (i.e., within countries) and regional.
    - Regional Economic Communities should play an important role, for instance in harmonization of standards and strengthening regional testing and analysis capacity.
    - At the continental level, ARSO will become a specialized agency of the AU and will work with national standards bodies in Africa to harmonize standards and develop standard protocols for testing, sampling, etc.
    - Action is needed now. How will we manage actions together? Find pilot projects to demonstrate how partners can collaborate to implement actions for effective aflatoxin control.
- Participants also supported the creation of a CAADP Working Group to mainstream SPS issues into the CAADP Programme.
- Participants from EuropeAid and USAID expressed strong support for holistic action on aflatoxin and continuing with the partnership approach. They also supported drawing attention to SPS issues. The EC called attention to the EDES program (a 30M Euro program) that can assist in all stages of aflatoxin control.

Need for Information, Interventions and Incentives

- Information is critical; information on health impacts, economic and trade impacts, information about effective interventions, information for farmers, companies, regulators, policy makers, etc.
- There is good experience in various value chains, e.g., cocoa, to inform implementation of effective interventions. Awareness raising among producers and other actors in the value chain and early testing to detect aflatoxin contamination are key elements of effective interventions. A reasonable impact can be made on controlling aflatoxin with good post-harvest practices.
- In many cases, producers won't know that their crops are contaminated with aflatoxin. This creates a large risk. It also creates a dilemma, in particular for those farmers who consume part of their crop.
- Experience in the Gambia shows that farmer capacity-building needs to start with very basic information.
- Malawi added that different stakeholders and different countries have different levels of understanding (e.g., random tests of peanut butter being sold in stores in

Malawi showing 400ppb aflatoxin contamination, and nobody had ever thought to test before).
- Parliamentarians are often overlooked, but can be effective communicators to build awareness among farmers.
- What is the incentive for farmers – especially those who rely on their production to feed their families – to adopt best practices aimed at minimizing aflatoxin contamination?
- It is critical to create incentives for adoption of best practices by creating tiered pricing systems. We should work with regulators and large buyers of crops to create these tiered systems.

Options for Controlling Aflatoxin/Solutions

- Considering the fact that the level of contamination is often not known, expensive to test, and that it can be difficult (and expensive) to adopt best practices, would an intermediate option be to use food additives (binding agents) to neutralize toxins?
- Products such as *Aflasafe*, a safe, cost-effective biocontrol product, developed by the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and its partners, that reduces aflatoxin in the field and stores, will be available in the market. *Aflasafe* has been provisionally registered by the Nigerian National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration and Control, and has been approved for on farm tests in Nigeria. Over the past 2 years, *Aflasafe* has resulted in reducing aflatoxin contamination of maize and groundnut consistently, by 80-90%.

Participants were advised of the many resources available through the Meridian website, including information on the food security, economic, health and trade impacts of aflatoxin contamination. As further information and next steps on the formation of PACA are developed, they will be posted on the Meridian website, and interested parties will be advised.

A background paper on aflatoxin, as well as further information about the proposed Partnership for Aflatoxin Control in Africa, is posted on the Meridian website, under the CAADP PP tab.

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